

## **NEIGHBORHOOD NETWORKS**

**Moderator: Michele Higgs**  
**February 21, 2006**  
**3:00 p.m. EDT**

**Operator:** Good day everyone and welcome to the Neighborhood Networks monthly conference call.

Today's call is being recorded.

At this time, I would like to turn the call over to Ms. Michele Higgs. Please go ahead.

**Michele Higgs:** Thank you Kim. Good afternoon everyone and welcome to the Neighborhood Networks February conference call. The topic for today's call is, "How Strong Are Your Partnerships? Building and Maintaining Successful Partnerships." As you heard, my name is Michele Higgs and I'm one of the technical assistance coordinators working with you to address the technical assistance needs of the various Neighborhood Networks around the country.

Before I introduce our speakers for this afternoon, I want to remind the community of multifamily Neighborhood Networks centers, that the Strategic Tracking and Reporting Tool, also known as the START business plan, contains resource materials that help you to survey your residents' needs and interests, to allow you to pinpoint the kinds of programs you want to offer. The START plan is also key to locating and monitoring the partnerships that you form to shape the programs that you've put together to meet your residents' needs.

If you have questions about the START business plan, resident surveys, partnership development or general questions pertaining to Neighborhood Networks, please call the toll-free Neighborhood Networks information line at (888) 312-2743. You can also visit the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org). Again, the information line is (888) 312-2743 and the Web site is [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org).

I also want to remind listeners that an audio and verbatim transcript of this call will be made available on the Neighborhood Networks site, in about two weeks.

I want to offer congratulations to the following new Neighborhood Networks centers. We have Pearson Court Learning Center in Kentucky, Pine Ridge of Montclair in New Jersey, Mars Senior Center Neighborhood Networks in Pennsylvania; Blue Ridge Commons Neighborhood Networks Center in Virginia. Welcome. Welcome all of you to the Neighborhood.

Now, is there a community college that might offer an internship to a student who would come by your center a couple of days a week to give instruction in computer basics? Or offer preschool instruction for children while single moms are learning how to put together their resumes? Is there a local barbershop that would offer opportunities for young men to learn the barbering craft? How about a bank that'll send an expert to instruct residents in financial literacy, or donate used computers to the center? Those people are partnerships.

Now, in order to help your center succeed, we're not talking about just "wink and a handshake" partnerships, but formal agreements, formal partnerships, on paper, that can be revisited to remind partners of what they've committed to do, one with the other. This afternoon, we want to help you to get a handle on the concept of partnership development and maintenance. A center director alone cannot do everything for a center. Neither can a dedicated volunteer or a HUD Neighborhood Networks Coordinator or a technical assistance coordinator. None of them can make things happen alone but together, they can work magic. Teamwork is what it's all about.

Identifying resources around the community that can be made available for the Neighborhood Networks center and building and nurturing those relationships to make things happen.

In a success story from the Neighborhood Networks Web site--and I remind you that that Web site can be accessed by going to [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org)--the Knowledge Center at the Terrace (and that would be the Green Park Terrace Apartments in Indianapolis, Indiana) was in need of technical assistance. Their computers were operating at slow speeds and the residents were getting frustrated. Service Coordinator Heather Bischoff noted that: "Over time, settings and set configurations had been changed by numerous people and the computers were in dire need of maintenance and cleanup by people who knew how to get the most out of them." And in a creative move, Bischoff contacted the local ITT Technical Institute and asked if they would be interested in a partnership. ITT Tech, with more than 75 institutes in 29 states, came to the table with an idea as well. After discussing the needs of the center, ITT suggested that they use the center as a laboratory in return for maximizing the efficiency of the center's computers. ITT would use the center as a final project for its students, a project that all students would complete in order to graduate.

In this instance, one group of students focused on networks issues, another on security issues, and yet another configured the server. In the six weeks it took for students to complete the project, they rebuilt existing computers to improve their efficiency, set up a new server and enhanced the security of the center's computers. The server now enables Bischoff to run reports, enhancing her ability to track activities at the center. That's a partnership.

Our speakers today all have different perspectives to offer on the topic of partnership development and I hope you will be able to take something away from this discussion that will strengthen your understanding of the partnership development and maintenance process. We have three folks who will speak with you about the care and feeding of partnerships and are ready to share this very important information to you. So, I will introduce Kenya Crumel, who is

Director of Partnerships with Neighborhood Networks Initiative and Brandon Felton, who's a technical assistance coordinator with Neighborhood Networks and who works with a specialty in partnership development, and Mike Moracco, who is the center director for People in Action at Springfield Gardens in Dewitt, New York, who, in his five years at the center, has developed more than a dozen partnerships for his center, including with Syracuse University and the Dewitt Rotary Club.

I'd first like to introduce Ms. Crumel, followed by Brandon and then Mike. Kenya, would you like to get started?

**Kenya Crumel:** Thanks Michele. Good afternoon everybody. As many Neighborhood Networks centers work to better sustain their centers, developing partnerships emerges as a key part of building strong, effective and efficient technology centers. With constraints on funding, time and staffing, collaborating with organizations within your community can broaden your sphere of influence and enable you to become more successful in your center's mission.

Partnerships take on many forms and can include donations of money, exchange of goods and services, volunteers, and shared programming. There are four primary types of partnerships. First, there's networking, where two organizations exchange information for the betterment of both. For example, a Neighborhood Networks center could collect the names of youths in grades nine through 12 and refer them to the local community center for SAT prep instruction. Second, there's coordinating: Two or more organizations might work together to make sure that their activities do not overlap. For example, a Neighborhood Networks center that offers children's activities could partner with an afterschool program and children in the afterschool program could come to the Neighborhood Networks center for technology-related activities, while children who regularly participate at the Neighborhood Networks center could attend one or two after-school programs of interest. A third partnership type is cooperating. Two or more organizations share resources, in order to achieve a common goal. For example, a Neighborhood Networks center

could partner with a church group that owns a van and the center could offer free computer classes to church members. In return, the center could use the van, during the week, for field trips and other outings, sort of like a bartering relationship. And lastly, there's the collaborative relationship, where two organizations work together, to the extent that they share risk, responsibilities and rewards. So, for example, the Neighborhood Networks center could train adults in Microsoft Office and basic computer skills, who then – who could then work as teachers at a local for-profit training facility that is looking for computer teachers.

Organizations should be clear about what type of partnership best suits their particular needs. And organizations need to think outside the box and not be afraid to partner with organizations that may have – that they may have thought would be hard to engage.

So, how does one go about securing a partnership? Asset mapping is one of the first steps many organizations take in building partnerships. Asset mapping is a process in which organizations brainstorm on the resources within their community. So you'll want to analyze assets such as your individual skills, talents, and experiences; your institutional assets, such as hospitals, colleges and universities; federal and state assets, such as state education agencies, military facilities, social service agencies; your organizational assets, such as corporations and media and business associations; your physical assets, such as vacant land, mining and industrial structures; and your cultural assets, such as historic and art schools, and cultural organizations.

So, while doing an asset map, Neighborhood Networks centers need to think about the following questions: What are your goals of your Neighborhood Networks center and what goals are you achieving, and which goals do you need to work on?

Once your center becomes aware of the resources around them, as well as their successes and areas needing improvement, they're better equipped to identify areas within the organization that could benefit from partnership building.

The next step is finding your partners. Oftentimes, administrators cannot find the time to network outside of their Neighborhood Networks center, but this is the best way to find potential partners. Nonprofit association groups, general meetings, Neighborhood Networks Week and nonprofit technical assistance training are all great places to meet other program administrators and learn about their organizations. A five-minute conversation and a business card exchange can spark ideas that can turn into great partnerships. If you already have a creative list of potential partners, do not hesitate to call them and speak to them about the possibilities. You may also put together a one-pager on the possible partnerships and set up a time, in the future, to meet face-to-face and discuss it further.

Marketing is an important component of partnership development for Neighborhood Networks centers. As you develop relationships and lay the groundwork for future partnerships, you must let your potential partners know exactly who you are and what you do. You can begin to do this by sharing the mission and vision statements for your center. Your organization's mission statement should clearly highlight the purpose of the organization, as well as how that purpose is achieved and who benefits from the activities of the organization. The vision statement should describe where the organization would like to see itself in the future. Knowing exactly why your center exists and who it serves and how it accomplishes its goals, will help you more effectively market your organization to potential partners and determine which partnerships align with the needs of your organization.

It's also important to review your organization's strategic plan or START business plan, before seeking partnerships with outside organizations. Your strategic plan or business plan clearly defines the purpose of the organization and establishes realistic goals and objectives, consistent with the mission statement. Any organization you approach about partnering with your Neighborhood Networks center should understand what your organization's goals are and what role partners can play in carrying out the activities that help accomplish these goals.

Neighborhood Networks presents a valuable opportunity for any partner wishing to make a strategic investment in a single community or in communities nationwide. Through partnerships with Neighborhood Networks centers, partners gain the opportunity to train a labor force with skills to meet their needs; open the new avenues for involvement in the community and the potential link to new markets; make a real difference in the economic health and wealth of the community and its people; and gain the value of marketing exposure to a network of technology centers across the country. These are things that you want to make sure your potential partners are aware of.

So, once you've decided to move forward on your partnerships, it's important to safeguard against problems down the road. Centers are often so eager to be involved in a partnership that they overlook clarifying all roles and responsibilities and tangible returns on the partnership. So, you must articulate the benefits of the partnership, as well as each organization's roles and responsibilities in a contract. Most centers or Neighborhood Networks consortia even use a Memorandum of Understanding.

Centers also need to make sure that you have adequate staffing, funding, and time to make the partnership work. In the early stages of a partnership, it may take time to get parties on the same page, while developing a plan of action. Administrators have to consider the time and money involved in developing the partnership. Depending on the type of partnership, partners may need to determine the leadership and how decisions will be made as challenges arise. Organizations should decide early on how decisions will be made, and who is the lead in representing the partnership and making key decisions if needed.

And lastly, communication and monitoring the partnership are very important aspects of running a smooth collaboration. All partners involved should make a decision as to how often the key players will meet, how long these meetings will last, where meetings will occur, and what

organization will lead the meeting. Also, in communicating internally and externally about the partnership, develop best practices to facilitate communicating effectively.

Thanks Michele.

**Michele Higgs:** Kenya, you have given a really good overview of what this whole process is all about and I hope everybody had their pencils out while you were speaking. Next, I'm going to ask Brandon to speak. He's going to cover a bit about the MOU, which you brought out close to the end of your discussion. Brandon.

**Brandon Felton:** Good afternoon everyone. I want to start – Kenya did an excellent job of covering, in a thorough presentation, of all the parts that are related to this process of partnership development. I just want to reiterate some points that she made for centers, particularly when you're trying to visualize how it's done. You know that you have to listen to your residents, first and foremost, about what it is that they're looking for you to bring to them. So you could have a great idea about some partners that you'd like to bring, but until you've done a resident survey and needs assessment, or you've talked to residents and you know who your audience is, you won't be able to provide the best partnership.

Also, that comes in regards to participation. You want to make sure that your people at the center are participating, so if you bring a center and a new program, just because you thought it was good, you'll know later by indication of participation whether or not that was the best one for you.

Some examples would be schools and community colleges that may have service groups or a sociology arm that do outreach. Youth organizations like Big Brothers and Big Sisters that provide mentoring or youth camps. Libraries that can provide some extra technology or meeting facility, maybe hospitals that contain a department that does community outreach or a health information arm. And also, some of the local government agencies that do workforce components like WIA,

which is Workforce Investment Act. A lot of areas have that department in the state. Also, technology user groups that can provide training, or any organizations that can provide volunteers, facilities, equipment or job opportunities.

It's also good to look at some 501(c)(3) organizations that may share your mission. Those are good potential partners because if you don't have your 501(c)(3), it allows you to go for it with a combined mission of achieving the same goal serving the same constituency.

So, what you can do is brainstorm create a wish list. Who are some of the people that you've worked with in the past? Who – maybe some of the property management or supervisors that have worked with some organizations prior to you being a center director. What's the partner's name? Where are they located? Do they serve your type of center? Do they have other offices? What's their mission? Is it similar? Who makes the decisions? And that's important because that's going to save you some time when you actually initiate contact and, like Kenya said, can it work and how is it going to work? How do you visualize this partnership to take place on a regular basis?

You also want to think about what your end of the deal is. Generally, a lot of partners are looking to partner with organizations that have either a specific demographic or out of good faith. It makes them look good. You both get added exposure, them doing something good in the community and you having somebody that's willing to work with you, so you must up end that part of the deal, hold your end of the deal and your obligation.

Also, as Kenya pointed out, marketing materials. You want to know who your residents are, what are your demographics. You know, what are your assets? What makes your center unique? What do you have going for it? Is it the technology? Is it specific people? Is it a majority that resides at your complex that has a greater need that the community needs the service? Those are things you have to think about and then when you actually initiate contact, you want to first find out who

is it you're supposed to be talking to. Introduce yourself. Who are you? What's your background? Why do you want to help? Aside from it being your job, everyone assumes that, but what's in it – what do you want to do? Introduce the center. Know your center's details. What are some of the things that are going for the center? Who do you have there using the center? Discuss the similarities between the organizations. There's a reason why you contacted them and they have a similar mission, so talk about some of the things that they may be interested in that's the same as your interests, as a center director and as a center. And then, you want to discuss your goals and potential outcomes for the partnership that you hope to achieve, and don't forget to include how they can benefit and then, you want to make sure that their contact information is in a safe place. You don't want to lose it and have to lose time by trying to locate that information again.

So, before I talk about formalizing a partnership, I just want to discuss some of the tips that I have for you. You want to make sure that they receive any of your information, such as, your brochure, if you have a Web site, anything that can market your center, you want to make sure that they receive that; particularly, when you say you're going to send it to them, you want to make sure that you follow up with that. Persistence does pay off, but you do have to be patient. You never know, their cycle might be different on when they receive money or when they have to give away money. Plus, they want to know, you know, how committed are you, so you can check in once a month as you're developing a discussion, or however it is necessary to maintain the discussions. You know, you want to let them tell you no.

Discuss your shared vision and interests. You want to initiate a face-to-face as well, so after you've talked to them a while, you try to bring them to the center. Let them see what you're doing. Let them see what you're about. Let them see who actually comes into the center. That's how they can actually see what this great thing you've been talking about how it's operating. And you also want to remember your names and your titles of the people that you're talking to and what's in it for them. What are their individual interests? And I think those are some of the hands-on things that you can really use to help you secure a partnership. Remember, it does take time, and

ultimately, partnerships serve you by helping to provide extra resources where most of us are trying to acquire, and maybe even personnel, but it does help to increase exposure for yourself and for the partner.

Okay, so as far as formalizing and monitoring your partnership, basically, a formalized partnership, you know, under a memorandum of understanding or what we call MOU, or a letter of agreement, it adds credibility to your partnership when you're working on your marketing materials, such as, a Web site or a brochure. You actually listing a community partner, shows that other people are willing to work with you. So this MOU is a document that includes the formal names of both organizations. It includes both mission statements from both organizations. It shows the intention of the center, what is the intended purpose of this partnership, a brief summary about the partner and about the center, the reason for the partnership, how long will it last, the duration, is it one year, two years, and what are the joint responsibilities of both?

Sometimes you have a center that is specifically going to do one part, and then there's a part that your center will take care of. Well, usually in a partnership you have joint responsibilities, whether that's to collect certain information on the results, or what have you. So tracking portion of the memorandum of understanding includes the data that you'll probably be collecting, such as, your participation. You know, who's going to be participating? Maybe the residents being referred, or the residents even being placed in a job if that's a workforce development partnership that you've implemented.

Let's see, results of the program or the partnership, if it yields any, and the period of performance, again, how long does this partnership – is it supposed to last, and also, you want to include – we call, a safe way out. And it's just a statement that says that the partnership can be cancelled through written notice within a certain time. And that allows everyone to be comfortable with trying this partnership out. You also want to include the personnel, the names, the titles, the contact information of each person who's signing, and then the lines for the signatures.

Now, you've heard us talk about a letter of agreement. It serves the same purpose but it's a lot quicker to get done and it has the basics of you know, who, what, when, where. Who's the partner, and it's usually written by them. What will they be providing to the center, for how long, and their contact information, and it's usually on their letterhead. They sign that and date that and that constitutes a formalized partnership for yourself, as well.

So, I think the LOA and the MOU are definitely important parts to partnership development. They're necessary for you to secure an official partnership and then I gave you some tips on how to implement those partnerships. Michele.

**Michele Higgs:** OK, thanks Brandon. We'll probably come up with questions at the end, so I hope that you guys, again, are holding on to your pencils because we're getting a lot of good information, particularly, the tips in dealing with this MOU.

The next individual we're going to have talking today is Mike Moracco and he's the Center Director for People in Action, Springfield Gardens in Dewitt, New York, and he's going to offer the perspective of being on the business end of this, you know, from being on the ground and working with these partnerships and having developed a number of them for his center. So, hopefully, he'll be able to bring yet another perspective to this issue. Mike?

**Mike Moracco:** Yes, thank you. You've listened, over the last two speakers, on steps and ways to maintain a partnership. I'm going to talk to you about the excitement of a partnership. It is extremely exciting to be able to look out into your community and look at the resources that you can touch and try to bring in by developing a partnership.

As a small center, we just recently only have three staff and they're not full-time staff. But the amount of programs and what we try to do are only attainable because of partnerships, so I get excited because, it's just a wealth of opportunities for us all to tap into. Developing partnerships,

within the community, are certainly crucial for us if we wish to successfully expand our Neighborhood Networks centers. By collaborating with organizations within the community, not only does it help us to keep our center out into the community's eye, but we can improve in areas that we may be weak in, in certain programs, or strengthen programs by developing these partnerships.

So, how does one start? Well, you've heard the various steps that we need to take but what I look for, also, in developing after I've looked at those steps, is what does our center need? Do we need equipment, volunteers, technical support, school books, counselors or do we want to develop a new program because of what we've heard from our residents but we don't have the money or the staff to do it? Keep in mind, when you're developing a partnership, that the partners are also gaining something from this relationship. They may be meeting their mission statement or they just simply want the notoriety out in the public. They may be meeting to discuss this, at the same time you're thinking of how to reach them. So, when determining a partner, think how this potential partner may benefit.

As a center, you can turn to just about anybody in the community for help. You can look at schools, churches, universities, colleges, clubs, other agencies and local businesses. You need to be creative and keep an open mind. Think outside the box when developing partnerships. You never know who will step to the plate and fill in a need. Involve your staff, which is important, and the residents, which is extremely important in helping to consider a partner or your need. If the residents and the staff are involved in the process, your chance for success are greater for both you and the partner.

At our center, called People in Action, we've developed partnerships with Syracuse University, Le Moyne College, Brian Stratton, and we've focused on these colleges to develop partnerships because we needed volunteers to help us. By developing these relationships, we have now over 44 students in the education field alone doing their internships with us. These college students

work in our afterschool program, tutoring one-on-one with our children. Also, because of the excitement that the students come back to the university or colleges with, we have faculty members who now are coming to us with ideas in developing new partnerships. For instance, running computer classes, developing art programs for us, ways to find art material. Just recently, we've developed with a media department at Le Moyne College, they want to develop a Web page for us, and a small videotape to help us use for fundraising.

Another program, which I'm very excited about, is developing with these local colleges an opportunity for us to take our middle school and high school kids to their universities and colleges and treat them as if they're an incoming freshman. Why? This helps to encourage some of these students that: "I can do this. They care. There's a way for us to do it." They sit with financial – in the financial office and they show them how to fill the forms. They give them all of the steps that they may not have heard of, or are afraid to ask for. So, the education component is a great resource to tap into.

Another partnership is with local schools. We work closely with our elementary schools and our middle school and high schools, and again, the partnership works hand-in-hand. It helps us to develop ways to develop resources, like counselors that come to our program or assistant principals that spend time to help our parents meet because transportation is a problem. These are just some of the ways. They've also helped us in fundraising in providing the school materials.

The most recent partnership we've established is with an architect company, a local building company, and Longley Jones, to put up a new learning center for our residents, to fill a much needed space problem we have. When we looked at this project, we could've easily said that to put a up a 2,300-square-foot building, financially, is way above our heads. But instead, we reached out to develop new partnerships and those new partners found other partners that would help us, and before we knew it, the amount that we wanted was not that unreachable. In fact,

many of them donated their services, saying that they wanted to just give something back to the community. So, if we all go – if all goes well, by this May we'll have our new facility.

In all of these partnerships and I determined – we, as a staff, determined what our needs were and then we set up our business plan, or an MOU. This helped to make sure that our partners knew what our needs were and what we were expecting from them, as well as what they were expecting from us. Have a contract or an MOU. Give the partners a clear and thought-out plan, making the partners feel more comfortable and even more committed.

In closing, I feel that partnerships are extremely, an exciting way for our centers to be able to grow and provide our residents opportunities that otherwise we may not have been able to develop but providing simply space, staff, equipment, money are just some of the resources that we can tap into. Just keep an open mind and don't think that, you know, it may not be able to be developed. Try it and I think you'll all be fantastically happy with the outcome.

**Michele Higgs:** Mike, that's great. I'm afraid everybody just threw down their phones and started planning, getting their partnerships going. That was – that's an excellent way to close this discussion and you're, you know, bringing in your experience from working with your center. I did want to ask a question of you. I notice that you also work with the Rotary Club, was that basically, getting connections and networking in the community?

**Mike Moracco:** We worked with both the Rotary Club and the Kiwanis Club and it was to help us develop community connections, as well as actually developing programs. For instance, we've developed through the Kiwanis, a reading program where their volunteers, from their committee, come in and actually work with our children, one-on-one for reading and they also help us in purchasing books, which we're able to then give to the children, after they've read it – read the book in our center, and then they can take it home to help encourage home reading as well.

**Michele Higgs:** I see. Well, I think I'm going to open up the lines now. Kim, do we have anyone on the queue?

**Operator:** Thank you Ms. Higgs. If you would like to ask a question, please do so by pressing the star key followed by the digit "one" on your touch-tone telephone. If you are using a speakerphone, please make sure your mute function is turned off to allow your signal to reach our equipment. Once again, press star, one, to ask a question.

And our first question today is from Kim Ball from town of Dewitt Parks.

**Michele Higgs:** That's great. Hi Kim.

**Kim Ball:** Hi, this isn't necessarily a question. Mike and I do work together. But I wanted to point out that too that Mike has been able to take advantage of the local parks and recreation department as a means and a vehicle through which he is able to have a full-time position and use our resources of the local government, as well.

**Michele Higgs:** Oh, I see, another partnership for opening up more opportunities for the center, you say.

**Kim Ball:** Yes, so I would encourage listeners to, you know, look at things that are in place. Mike mentioned the public funded school districts, but you also have local government entities too that might be able to tap into grants and resources to help such a project.

**Michele Higgs:** I see. That's – did you have another example of that? I know you said, just other organizations, just – you're with the parks and recreation department and you're saying the public schools and where else might you suggest?

**Kim Ball:** Well, another thing that Mike was able to do, he was able to tap into a grant through the local community development fund, so you know, those are all entities that are in most communities that you can, also, get resources from. And Mike's done a great job of finding what resources are out there and making great use of them.

**Michele Higgs:** I see. Thank you Kim. It's just another example of thinking outside the box.

**Kim Ball:** Yes.

**Michele Higgs:** We have a question from Brandon, here.

**Brandon Felton:** Sorry to interrupt the queue, Mike can you talk about what you discussed when implementing these partnerships? What were some of the benefits and the assets that you discussed to potential partners, such as, the parks and recreation department and how can centers go about discussing this type of thing or feel comfortable?

**Mike Moracco:** Well, you know, again, its with the parks and recreation department, obviously, they're – as part of program that they provide, they look at ways that, you know, how can we draw and support, you know, the individuals within our community that participate in the Town of Dewitt. And because of that, and because of the philosophy from Kim Ball, the director, her openness to allow the program to grow really leaves every avenue open and it supports the town because it provides, in this case, as they develop this program, it really developed an area that needed to have resources provided for them, and because they supported it and saw the need for it, it benefits their whole total community.

Now, in another example would be with the colleges. You know, a benefit to the colleges is that many of the different courses look for placement for their students as part of a requirement that they need to fill, within their – for their degree, obviously, their internship, and so, by being able to

be creative and looking at away to niche that into your program, the colleges will jump on it because its hard sometimes to – for them to find opportunities for their students because they may be placing 60 or 80 or 100 students in one class and its not always an easy situation. So, if they can develop a relationship that they feel comfortable, it's a win-win for both sides, as was for the town, which you know, as a parks and recreation department for the town of Dewitt, it's a wonderful way to reach the community section that may, or may not, have the opportunities out there.

**Michele Higgs:** The – I'm going to open up the queue for just a second, but I want to make a comment here and its just going back to what's been said before about thinking out of the box and looking at all of the – when asset mapping, as Kenya had mentioned earlier, you know, really looking around your community for the various resources that could be of assistance to you whether it's the community college, or the elementary school, or the middle school, or you know, the barbershop, you know, somewhere in that community there are going to be resources that can be helpful and mutually beneficial, probably. What you're talking about Mike, in terms of you know, the schools needing to place students and center's need to think about the possibilities that might be available for them, to have opportunities for students to come and help, you know, either its assisting with, you know, education. If you have a school of education there and those students have to go out and teach somewhere, they could come in and work with the young people or the kids on the computer, there are any number of things that can happen. I'm just throwing in that comment but Kim, is there anyone else on the line there?

**Operator:** Yes, we do have another question and that comes from Julia Ivanov from Fort Vancouver Terrace.

**Michele Higgs:** Great. Hi Julia.

**Theresa:** Hi Michele, it's actually Theresa.

**Michele Higgs:** Oh, hi Theresa.

**Theresa:** I'm calling because I wanted to pipe in, not with a question, but more dealing with the community colleges. They're kind of the one untapped markets that nobody touches and one of the things that most people don't know, is that most community colleges have a multimedia department and if you were to contact the head of that department and let them know you're a nonprofit agency and you're looking for someone to work with them, to volunteer their time to build a Web site that they can use for their portfolio, you are able to get students who are either at the beginning or end. They usually let you interview and they bring work examples and you can get a whole entire team together to help you build your Web site and to make it something that is – something that someone else would pay \$5,000 for but you get it for free, and they get it for their portfolio. So, its one of those very beneficial things for both parties and you know, also, then it also gets a way to, you know, have that touch again with the community.

**Michele Higgs:** Exactly, another win-win situation.

**Theresa:** Exactly.

**Michele Higgs:** Good.

**Theresa:** But that was it. I just – we've used them in the past, so I thought that'd be a good one to share.

**Michele Higgs:** That's terrific, thank you. Thank you very much.

**Operator:** Our next question comes from Jeanine Schmidt from Durango Housing.

**Jeanine Schmidt:** Hello. I have a unique question that – for our center, and as far as marketing in our newsletter we like to thank our volunteers, or thank our contributors, but we've had changes going from a community center to just serving the residents of Durango Housing and we've held on to our large donations but, – and there are just a few, but our smaller donations, we kind of dropped because they were going towards – they were – people were supporting the community computer classes, which we don't have any more and so, – but in – when I write, you know, their names in the newsletter and stuff like that, it looks like that they've dropped, you know, our donations have dropped a lot and I don't – and I feel like it doesn't make the organizations that did contribute to us and still do, feel secure, as far as that drop and they don't know why. Or – so, I don't quite know how to approach that in this upcoming newsletter. That's ...

**Brandon Felton:** Hi Jeanine, it's Brandon.

**Jeanine Schmidt:** Hi Brandon.

**Brandon Felton:** We'll probably be talking about that real soon.

**Jeanine Schmidt:** OK.

**Brandon Felton:** So, right now, we probably want to stick to kind of partnerships, but I definitely understand your concern and I'm going to make note of that and we're going to talk about that real soon.

**Jeanine Schmidt:** OK, thank you.

**Brandon Felton:** All right, thanks for calling.

**Jeanine Schmidt:** All right.

**Michele Higgs:** Brandon must be planning a technical assistance visit our there.

**Brandon Felton:** That's right.

**Michele Higgs:** Good. Kim, is there anyone else on the line?

**Operator:** Yes, our next question comes from Jasmine McCoy from the Neighborhood Technology Resource Center.

**Michele Higgs:** Hi Jasmine.

**Jasmine McCoy:** Hi, how are you? Well, I actually don't have a question. You guys answered all of my questions, like the people before me but, and this is my first time actually participating on a conference call, so everything was kind of going so fast but my questions were answered previously, so don't have one.

**Michele Higgs:** Oh, OK. Glad we were able to help then.

**Jasmine McCoy:** Yes.

**Michele Higgs:** Kim, do you have any others on the line?

**Operator:** Yes and just a reminder, it is star, one, if you have a question.

**Michele Higgs:** Thank you.

**Operator:** Our next question is from Marisa Connaughton

**Marisa Connaughton:** Hi, I actually have a question about, if you're a frustrated center director and besides looking at the traditional, I guess, partnership organizations like colleges and boys and girls groups, where else could I go to form a partnership? What other organizations are out there?

**Michele Higgs:** Well, I'll throw that open to our speakers. Who wants to pick that one up?

**Mike Moracco:** Well, this is Mike. I mean, again, I guess the first thing I would want to know is, you know, what needs are your residents really asking for and then, based on that, you know, I would – you know there's definitely other components that you can do, local stores or local beauty salons. You know, we brought in a partnership with a group of women, seniors, that did, okay, you help me with it, they did quilting, and by partnering with them, they came in and taught our kids something that we wouldn't have been able to really, you know, do, based on not having that expertise, and the kids loved it and it actually went on to some of the adults wanted to learn it. So, I guess, it's just trying to look at some of the interests and some of what you're hearing, kind of rumbling and directions, and then seeing, you know, by just talking out there, who may be able to step in and give you some advice or direction to go with.

**Marisa Connaughton:** Now, would you suggest, possibly, maybe some adult education centers or joining a professional organization, would that be an alternative to finding some additional resources or organizations?

**Mike Moracco:** You want me to take that again?

**Michele Higgs:** Yes, sure, if you wish.

**Mike Moracco:** Again, I think that was one of the things that when Michele had asked me the question with the Rotary Club. Its important because I don't have time to stay up on what else is happening

in the community or the other groups that may be forming, and having an agency or some of the directions that you had just mentioned, become a great step in finding out what else is out there. Who else is out there that could be useful and those types of agencies or clubs can be really beneficial and it can be time-consuming but its worth taking the time to kind of look and I know, you know, as a staff, we try to go around and give various talks to as many of these agencies or clubs or – that we can so that one, we can learn really what do they offer and what can we provide but also, so that we can get our name out there and see if there is a link between us.

**Marisa Connaughton:** Thank you.

**Brandon Felton:** I would say to think of it like you're in a political campaign. When you're running for an office, generally, a governor or anyone, a senator, has to go to as many different organizations as they can to possibly speak about what their focus is, what their mission is and who they want to serve. Well that's the same thing as a center director, if you have time, but you also, as Mike said, involve your staff, involve other people that are helping you to get there. If you're a (501-C-3), your board members are also a good resource to be out in the community and to try to figure out what are some of these organizations around, what are the affiliations and who can help, and by talking about your cause and who you serve and how you serve them, usually, these smaller communities there's always and organization that has either heard of you or has worked with you in the past and may like who you are and want to do some kind of service for your organization.

**Mike Moracco:** And one last thing to add to that, whenever you have the opportunity to either get news coverage or media coverage, always make sure that those partners or potential partners are first on the list and then talk about your program. You know, I just find that just helps so much more. Other new groups that say, you know, hey this could be an opportunity for us because look what happened.

**Marisa Connaughton:** Okay.

**Michele Higgs:** And the thing, too, is you know, be sure – I mean this sort of wraps all of this up but you know, be – always be armed with your mission statement in mind and your business card in hand, and whomever you have an opportunity to talk with could be a potential partner and just know that, and be aware and be ready and, you know, we've talked about this in different venues before, you get to various groups and you get to various meetings but you have to be ready. You know, if the opportunity comes up you've got to be ready to take it and spread the word about your center.

**Marisa Connaughton:** Okay. All right, thank you so much.

**Michele Higgs:** Absolutely. Kim, have we anyone else on the line?

**Operator:** Yes, our next question is from Eleanor Peyton from HUD.

**Michele Higgs:** Hi Eleanor.

**Eleanor Peyton:** Hi, how are you? I'm calling really with comment more than a question because I've heard what others have talked about. I've actually gone out and spoken at public forum briefly on the Neighborhood Networks initiative and also, on the consortium, especially, the Southern Louisiana Consortium; as you're well aware, I am not in the New Orleans area right now and I have been relocated to Texas only because of the storm we had there. So, I haven't worked very closely with my Neighborhood Networks any more, but before I left New Orleans, we were in the process of trying to develop a partnership with the Boys and Girls Club and also, with the federal executive board. I think with the federal executive board, it would be a great partnership because of all the other federal agencies. I don't know if any of the other Neighborhood Networks across the country has tried that but it would be a great partnership if we could do that.

**Michele Higgs:** The federal executive board?

**Eleanor Peyton:** Yes. With the federal executive board, each federal agency – they meet once a month or certainly, they meet once a month on various things and the president of the board in Louisiana or in the New Orleans area was very interested in hearing about our initiative, but we didn't get a chance to do that prior to the storm and after the storm we really haven't been back. I haven't been back to New Orleans since August 29.

**Michele Higgs:** Wow, so it's still up in the air.

**Eleanor Peyton:** Yes, it's still up in the air for us. I will go back but I don't know when, so I'm doing things sort of long distance.

**Michele Higgs:** I see, just keeping track of what's going on.

**Eleanor Peyton:** Right and in that area, I've probably lost, probably, most of the Neighborhood Networks, especially, in immediate New Orleans, but trying to revive them, when things get better, it's going to be a challenge.

**Michele Higgs:** Well that's a good way of looking at it, not going to be impossible, just going to be a challenge.

**Eleanor Peyton:** Right.

**Michele Higgs:** Well, thank you so much for this information.

**Eleanor Peyton:** Okay.

**Michele Higgs:** Take good care.

**Eleanor Peyton:** Thank you.

**Michele Higgs:** Okay., Kim, is there anyone else on the line?

**Operator:** Yes we do. We have a question from Lawanda Gardner from New Horizons Learning.

**Michele Higgs:** Okay., Hi Lawanda.

**Lawanda Gardner:** My question is, I was interested in joining the Chamber of Commerce because I thought it would be a good networking tool for the center, since most businesses in the surrounding area is part of this, would that be a good idea?

**Michele Higgs:** The Chamber of Commerce?

**Lawanda Gardner:** The Chamber of Commerce.

**Michele Higgs:** Yes, I would imagine that it would be. Now, I think that, have you looked into it at all?

**Lawanda Gardner:** Yes, I have.

**Michele Higgs:** Because it would be, you know, that's made up of all the businesses in your area?

**Lawanda Gardner:** Right.

**Michele Higgs:** And, you know, what better place then among those folks who are already doing business in your area to spread the word about what you're doing on your property.

**Lawanda Gardner:** Exactly. That was our thinking but my next question is, since we deal with excess income, would we be able to join using part of those funds?

**Michele Higgs:** Now that's a question that I would have to refer to – or probably to your HUD coordinator.

**Lawanda Gardner:** Right.

**Michele Higgs:** And where are you calling me from?

**Lawanda Gardner:** From Kalamazoo, Michigan.

**Michele Higgs:** Okay. What I will do is get the information and get back to you. Would that be of help to you?

**Lawanda Gardner:** Yes, it would.

**Michele Higgs:** Still there?

**Lawanda Gardner:** Yes. I'm here.

**Michele Higgs:** And that was Lawanda?

**Lawanda Gardner:** Yes, Lawanda Gardner.

**Michele Higgs:** Okay. I will research that for you, because I honestly don't know the response to that one.

**Lawanda Gardner:** Okay.

**Michele Higgs:** Does anyone else know the answer to that one? Okay, I'll get back to you. Thanks for calling.

**Operator:** And moving on, we have a question from Julie Gunkelman from Charisma.

**Michele Higgs:** Okay, Julie.

**Julie Gunkelman:** Yes, hi. I more probably had a comment and a question. My question was, would it be possible to get all those wonderful tips and lists from your presenters over – through our e-mail? I couldn't quite write fast enough ...

**Michele Higgs:** Oh okay, as ...

**Julie Gunkelman:** ... to keep up with everything that they said and then my comment would be, we too, have tried to partner with the Boys and Girls Club, as a great tool to get a very good youth program in place and found it to be a bit of a challenge. I think they have an awesome program, but our city also has a pretty significant YMCA presence and there's a little bit of conflict between those two organizations, so that would be something that I would think of if I was a city looking to bring in. The Boys and Girls Club is the support from the town itself because they seem to compete a little bit and the United [Way] – or the Y is a big funder here. They get a lot of support, long time, and we struggle to try and bring in the Boys and Girls Club.

**Brandon Felton:** What was the purpose of that partnership you were seeking there?

**Julie Gunkelman:** With the Boys and Girls Club?

**Brandon Felton:** Yes.

**Julie Gunkelman:** Well, we were looking just to be able to offer a really healthy youth program ...

**Brandon Felton:** Okay.

**Julie Gunkelman:** ... where we will just provide the facility and, or help, with the facility, and then they would come in and actually, I don't think there was going to be much of a partnership. I think they just wanted to kind of on their own.

**Brandon Felton:** Right.

**Julie Gunkelman:** And we were just going to sort of help them get started. I actually had a nice building that would work perfect but they were not very willing to be partners. They were more willing to come in and just do their own thing ...

**Brandon Felton:** Right.

**Julie Gunkelman:** ...and yes.

**Brandon Felton:** Well, you might want to look at Big Brothers and Big Sisters to see if they have that organization in your area.

**Julie Gunkelman:** Yes, we've got that one. We've got that one. That's a real strong organization.

**Brandon Felton:** That's a good one as an alternative.

**Julie Gunkelman:** Yes.

**Brandon Felton:** Also, some churches already have youth programs set up in your area and if you're open to that possibility, you might want to seek – and see who your – what churches are your residents generally going to and then seek out that specific church and see if they have a youth program and see if you all can do some kind of partnership in that regard.

**Julie Gunkelman:** Yes, that's a good idea. Thank you.

**Michele Higgs:** All right, thank you for calling in. Kim, it looks like we're running close to the end of time, do we have any other callers?

**Operator:** We have no further questions at this time.

**Michele Higgs:** Okay, talk about timing. Thank you Brandon. Thank you Kenya and thank you Mike for joining us today. I think this has been a very helpful call. We've gotten a lot of good questions and comments about the call. I also want to thank my colleague, Dana Gumbs who coordinated this call, but who is now probably somewhere over the U.S. en route to a technical assistance visit in California at the Sunny Meadows Computer Learning Center in Freedom, California. Good travels, Dana. So, since there are no more questions, I want to remind you of the resources that are available to you through the Neighborhood Networks Initiative. Aside from the Neighborhood Networks information line, which is (888) 312-2743, you may find partnership resources and information on the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org). On the Web site, you'll see success stories that might spark an idea for you or validate a plan that you've been considering for center.

Beyond that, if you look to the menu on the left of the Web site, you will see a link for partnerships, which will offer you details on local and national partnerships, as well as how to present the concept to a potential partner and mark your calendars, the RTAWs are coming and for those of

you who don't what RTAWs are, that is the Regional Technical Assistance Workshops. On the West Coast, they will in San Diego April 5 through 7, 2006 and on the East, in Boston, in Massachusetts June 21 through 23. You can register for them now by going on to the Neighborhood Networks Web site at [www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org](http://www.NeighborhoodNetworks.org).

Also, be advised that you will be able to get an audio and the verbatim transcript of this call in about two weeks on the Web site. If you need any assistance with your ideas for your Neighborhood Networks week, which is going to be coming up July 31 through August 5, you give us a call on that toll-free line, (888) 312-2743, and if you have any questions about Neighborhood Networks in general, you can call that line. I thank you so much for joining us for this conversation today and I remind you that our next conference call will take place on Tuesday, March 21 at 3 p.m., on the topic of the IRS Can Be Your Friend: Utilizing IRS Resources at Your Neighborhood Networks Center. Thanks again everyone. Take good care.

**Operator:** That does conclude our conference call today. Thank you all for your participation.

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